

# Diabetes

## and Heart Disease and Stroke

Diabetes is a serious risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Keeping diabetes under control, or preventing it altogether, can help protect your health.

The number of Missourians with diabetes continuously increased during the past five years. Thousands more have the disease, but don't know it.

Many adults in Missouri have pre-diabetes, a condition that often develops into diabetes. Research shows that some long-term damage to the body, especially to the heart and circulatory system, may already be occurring in people with pre-diabetes.

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which your body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that helps regulate your body's blood sugar level. The cause of diabetes is unknown, but risk factors such as obesity and a lack of exercise increase a person's risk of developing the disease.

There are three main types of diabetes. Type 1 requires a person to take insulin to live. Type 2, the most common type, can be controlled through diet, exercise and, in some cases, medications, including insulin. The third type, gestational diabetes, is a temporary condition that occurs in women during pregnancy.

### Signs and symptoms of diabetes

Some people with diabetes will not experience any symptoms while others will have one or more of the following:

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme hunger
- Sudden vision changes or blurry vision
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Feeling tired much of the time
- Very dry skin
- More infections than usual

If you experience these symptoms or others you should see a health care provider.

If you are over age 45, you should have your blood glucose level tested every three years to check for diabetes. If you have risk factors for diabetes, your health care provider may recommend more frequent tests.

Determine your risk by utilizing the American Diabetes Association risk test at <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/prevention/diabetes-risk-test/>.

### How can diabetes be prevented?

There are no known methods to prevent type 1 diabetes, but the onset of type 2 diabetes often can be prevented or delayed with healthy lifestyle choices:

- Be physically active at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol use.

Diabetes cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. If you have diabetes, see your health care provider regularly and take your medications as prescribed.

More information can be found at:  
[health.mo.gov/diabetes](http://health.mo.gov/diabetes)

